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August 23, 2011

The Honorable Rick Jones
Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 110, Farnum Building
125 W. Allegan Street,
Lansing, MI 48933

Dear Senator Jones and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I write in support of Representative Heise's House Bill 4349, which will provide local law enforcement more flexibility in the use of drug forfeiture funds.

A number of years ago, while serving in the legislature, I sponsored legislation similar to HB 4349 but it was never passed. Now as the Supervisor of Canton Township, I see the need for this legislation even more clearly.

My community has a population of over 90,000 residents. We have a full-service Public Safety Department, and as such, we have had to make some very tough decisions recently because of the economy and dramatic decline in taxable revenue. This bill would provide us some assistance as we continue to stretch our dollars and look for alternative funding solutions.

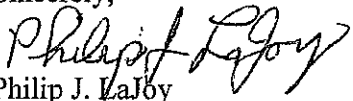
Canton currently has over \$450,000 sitting in our drug forfeiture account. We have used the dollars for a variety of permitted purchases, like dogs and their related upkeep, but frankly the money is best spent by keeping our police officers on the streets. Drug-prevention is every officer's job.

The bottom line is that in this dire economy, communities need flexibility. It makes absolutely no sense to me that communities would lay off police officers because of budget constraints, and not have access to the revenue sitting in a dedicated account like drug forfeiture monies are.

Amending this legislation would liberate local governments to use their revenues as they see fit in order to meet the demands of their community. Local communities should be trusted to use the available funds wisely. If a local government makes poor choices with its revenue, the solution is at the ballot box with their voters.

I appreciate the Committee's consideration of this important legislation and I appreciate Representative Heise's introduction of this important bill for local communities.

Sincerely,


Philip J. LaJoy
Canton Township Supervisor